

# Happiness Pony

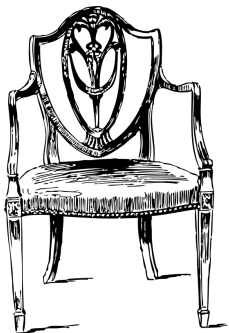
Our only hope is an unlikely hero.

HAPPINESSPONY.COM

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2013.

A GIFT.

Crompton  
Collective



An artisan and antique mall.  
138 Green Street, Worcester.  
CromptonCollective.com

The internet has both surpassed and engulfed any and all artistic production made in the past fifty years. More Duchampian than Duchamp, the web's radical reframing of artifacts has rendered all things digital into readymades. More Warholian than Warhol, the web is a replicating machine of unsurpassed capability. More Beuysian than Beuys, the web's radical participatory democratization has literally enacted the idea that Jeder mensch ein kunstler. Shhhhh... the new radicalism is paper. Right. Publish it on a printed page and no one will ever know about it.

Kenneth Goldsmith



"Mothers News"  
IT IS A  
NEWSPAPER.  
mothersnews.net

## The Quicksand of Worcester

Quicksand is a thick gel of sand, clay, and water. When agitated, parts get thicker and others thinner, causing anyone standing on it to sink down a few feet. Reversing the process is tricky.

Historically, there has been lots of quicksand in Worcester. Quicksand like the deposit near Curtis Pond was filled in with gravel to allow construction. For years there was rumored to be quicksand in a swampy area of Green Hill Park, later covered by a landfill, and finally an open field.

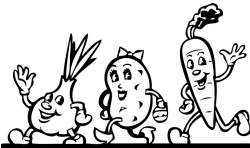
Other quicksand persisted underground, as in this florid 1871 description of the area around Elm Park (itself once a swamp):

The Pools keep up their level until the in-gathering of hay. Thereafter, at once as it were, throughout the whole alluvium or diluvium, for the spade can justify either term, the water subsides in a night, sinking into the veins that percolate the shifting subsoil or quicksand underlying all that part of Worcester which stretches from Highland Street to Coe's Reservoir and occupies the entire valley between Fruit and Piedmont Streets to the East and Newton Hill on the West. When heavy showers have saturated the surrounding country, the water in those Pools again rises, evidently supplied from subterranean fountains that respond to the bounteous clouds with the regularity of tides.

Historical accounts describe much more quicksand in the surrounding towns than in Worcester, and in fact we've heard one secondhand account of a girl escaping quicksand in Hubbardston just this summer. But it seems like you should still be able to find quicksand in Worcester near springs or relatively still open water.

Truth be told we might have more quicksand now than back then. You see, it is all about fine sand and silt, and the ratio of water by volume to the grit. We have been eroding the heck out of everything, and we have old dams everywhere skimming off the silt and sand into large and deep beds. One might postulate that you have a better chance of sinking into this accumulated muck than whatever Mother Nature was up to way back in the day. Sandy bars on the edge of water, and along bends in the river, beware! Muddy flats above the old dam, beware! (*Mike Benedetti and Colin Novick*)

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Alluvium: Sediment deposits from slow water flows.

Diluvium: Sediment deposits from floods.



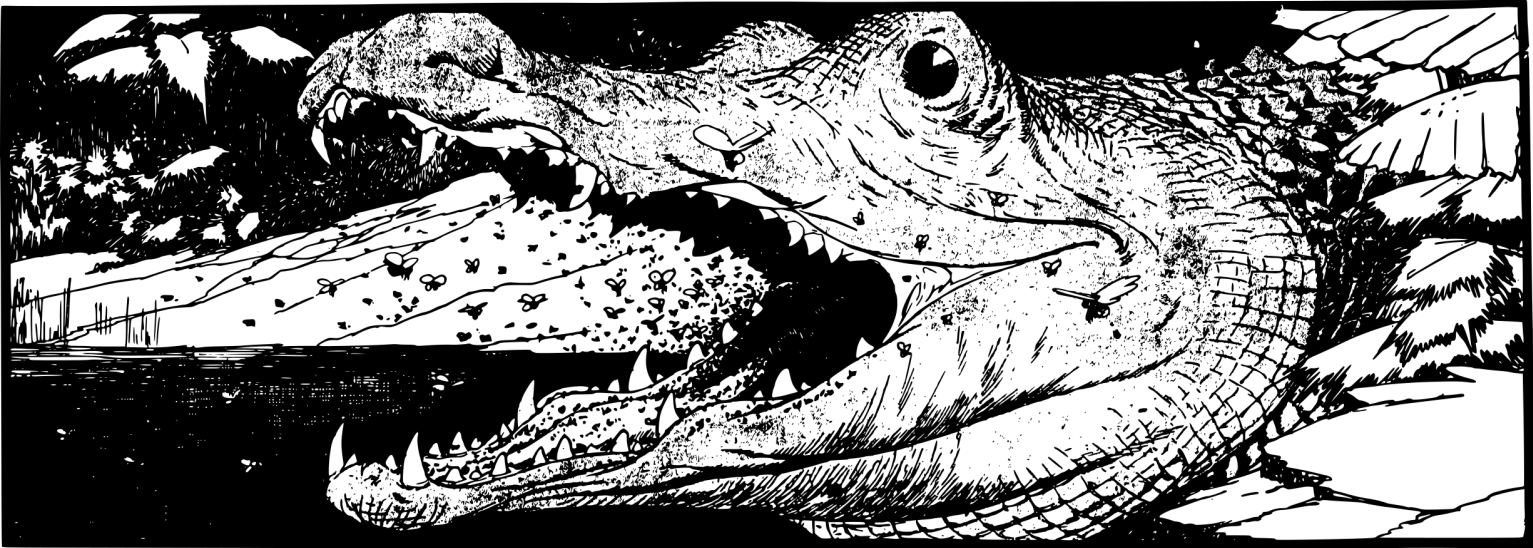
HX Library

Burnt books from across the city. Science fiction & unconventional politics. Across from Diamond Chevrolet. Moving to Stone Soup in January.



Center for  
Nonviolent  
Solutions

Building a culture of peace  
in Worcester and beyond.  
nonviolentsolution.org





## Not just a Nobel Prize.

Sure, Albert Camus won the 1957 Nobel Prize for Literature. And some people think that makes him a 20th century dinosaur. But when confronted with the apparent meaninglessness of life and the constant struggle it requires, you could do worse than have this intellectual T. Rex in your corner.

Camus. As relevant as ever. Now 10% off with this ad.

sketch courtesy Petr Vorel

## Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker Community



Performing the works of mercy and opposing the works of war.  
52 Mason Street, Worcester.  
508-753-3588

### CLASSIFIED ADS

### BOOKS, YIDDISH+ENGLISH

**Not In The Same Breath** by Zackary Sholem Berger: 1/3 Yiddish, 1/3 English, 2/3 Pretty Pictures. [bit.ly/NITSBAmazon](http://bit.ly/NITSBAmazon)

**Cat In The Hat and Curious George** in Yiddish. [yiddishcat.com](http://yiddishcat.com)

### MUGS, TIKI

**Sallywag Ceramics.** Exotic curiosities. [sallywagceramics.com](http://sallywagceramics.com)



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# Swamp Thing

Readers familiar with the comic book world will remember Alan Moore’s legendary 1980s run writing for “Swamp Thing” as the seminal first strike in his quest to revolutionize comics into a respected literary medium. Moore bucked the “comics code” in favor of an adult-oriented horror story that pushed the bounds of the superhero genre and opened the gates for adult comics like “Sandman,” “Hellblazer,” and the entire Vertigo adult comics line.

The 12 pre-Moore years of “Swamp Thing” followed the story of a botanist who accidentally was contaminated by his experimental biorestorative formula and emerged as swamp monster, doomed to wander in search of his lost humanity whilst pursued by an Americana arsenal of ghouls, cops, fearful townsfolk, and bears. Moore took this muddle and added new disturbing twists that reframed the Swamp Thing as a plant god, tasked with defending the Earth’s flora, but who is more interested in making out with his girlfriend. Moore added human pain, social ills, romance, and mental illness to a previously boring superhero comic. All this led to a wave of comic writers adding horror and human strife to their caped heroes. Batman as an elderly obsessive alcoholic, Animal Man as a depressed third-rate hero who no one calls, etc. However, many of these writers failed to understand the innovations in “Swamp Thing.” They pushed grief and pain into comics to make them more “adult.” As if brutality is what makes a world real. As if despair smeared onto an otherwise plastic world is a mirror reflection of the reality we live in. As if torturing old superheroes for shock value should be called “adult.” They neglected the other qualities that made “Swamp Thing” a hit. Moore’s “Swamp Thing” was not just an exploration of extremely dark terrain, but all the middling grey areas of life. Should the Swamp Thing defend the plants by exterminating humanity? If not, how can he stop humans from further harming the ecosystem? Are super villains or larger human systems to blame? How can human needs and ecology be woven in a way that mutually benefits both? Moore’s comic was a horror story, but one filled with love, supportive friends, and small eddies of angst and triumph. (*Shane Capra*)



# The Bog Fruit

Advertisements have convinced many that Massachusetts’s iconic cranberries are grown in water. In commercial cranberry production, bogs are indeed flooded to facilitate harvest, causing the ripe fruit to float while the rotten fruit sinks. But in the wild, the cranberry’s evergreen vine grows in waterlogged areas of moss, peat, and acidic soil. Cranberries are one of only three recognizable edible fruits native to this area, used by the native Nipmuc for food, medicine, and dye. It’s worth looking for them in swampy areas near you. For a good shot at finding cranberries in the wild, from Worcester take Rte 70 toward Boylston. On your left, past Tahanto Regional High School, there are walking trails that will lead you along the shore of Wachusetts Reservoir where cranberries grow. Harvest time is in late fall, but even in winter you may be able to find berries frozen in the snow waiting to be cooked into something delicious. (*Jen Burt*)



### Zones of Refuge

AN EXCERPT FROM *THE ART OF NOT BEING GOVERNED* BY JAMES SCOTT

To mention only a few, the great marsh on the lower Euphrates (drained under Saddam Hussein’s rule) was for two thousand years a refuge from state control. So, on a smaller scale, were the storied Great Dismal Swamp on the North Carolina–Virginia border, the Pripet Marshes in Poland, now on the Belarus–Ukraine border, and the Pontian Marshes near Rome (drained finally by Mussolini) known as zones of refuge from the state. The list of such refugia is at least as long as the list of coercive labor schemes that inevitably spawn them.

... In white-settler-ruled North America, swamps, quite as much as mountains and the frontier, were sanctuaries of rebellion and escape. The Seminoles, under Chief Osceola, together with their runaway slave allies, fought a seven-year rear-guard action against federal troops bent on enforcing Andrew Jackson’s policy of Indian removal. The Great Dismal Swamp on the eastern Virginia–North Carolina border was home to thousands of escaped slaves for several generations, “right in the midst of the strongest slave-holding communities in the South.” They joined renegade whites, southerners avoiding conscription, deserters, those fleeing the law, moonshine distillers, hunters, shingle-cutters, and trappers.

### The Slave in the Dismal Swamp

In dark fens of the Dismal Swamp  
The hunted Negro lay;  
He saw the fire of the midnight camp,  
And heard at times a horse’s tramp  
And a bloodhound’s distant bay.

Where will-o’-the-wisps and glow-worms shine,  
In bulrush and in brake;  
Where waving mosses shroud the pine,  
And the cedar grows, and the poisonous vine  
Is spotted like the snake;

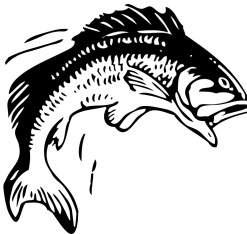
Where hardly a human foot could pass,  
Or a human heart would dare,  
On the quaking turf of the green morass  
He crouched in the rank and tangled grass,  
Like a wild beast in his lair.

A poor old slave, infirm and lame;  
Great scars deformed his face;  
On his forehead he bore the brand of shame,  
And the rags, that hid his mangled frame,  
Were the livery of disgrace.

All things above were bright and fair,  
All things were glad and free;  
Lithe squirrels darted here and there,  
And wild birds filled the echoing air  
With songs of Liberty!

On him alone was the doom of pain,  
From the morning of his birth;  
On him alone the curse of Cain  
Fell, like a flail on the garnered grain,  
And struck him to the earth!

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow  
from the abolitionist poetry collection  
Poems on Slavery (1842)*



### HAPPINESS PONY Income Statement November 2013

<b>Revenue</b>	
Donations from editors	\$47.50
Ad sales	\$0.00
Other donations	\$0.00

<b>Expenses</b>	
500 copies	\$42.50
Test copies	\$5.00

<b>Net Income</b>	\$0.00
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Happiness Pony is a free monthly newspaper published in Worcester, Massachusetts. This issue was edited by Shane Capra, Jen Burt, & Mike Benedetti. Masthead by Aiden Duffy from a 1775 issue of the *Massachusetts Spy*.  
[editor@happinesspony.com](mailto:editor@happinesspony.com)